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Cloak-and-Dagger Agency

40 Million Punch Cards Carry CIA Data;
Secrecy Hides Spending and Operations

Just about every commentator who claims to be on the ball has done a piece about the inside of the Central Intelligence Agency. So here's mine.

When you call the CIA the telephone girl doesn't admit that you've gotten through. She merely repeats the number. That has undoubtedly confounded many thousands of foreign spies.

When you drive out to the CIA, which is about eight miles along the super highway to Dulles Airport in Virginia, the turn-off is merely labeled "B. P. R." B. P. R. stands for Bureau of Public Roads, which, true enough, has its headquarters in the vicinity. But the modesty of the much more glamorous CIA must confuse many foreign agents. When they inadvertently wind up at the airport, it is hoped that some of them will simply take the next plane home.

One other thing — when I arrived at the front entrance the cop at the door greeted me conspiratorially as "Colonel." This no doubt indicates that colonels in Army G-2 disguise themselves in business suits and drive around in dirty brown Chevrolets with Oklahoma licenses.

Oh, yes. And the security officer who takes you up to the executive wing unlocks the elevator with a key. And the lamb chops in the director's dining room are wonderful.

This about wraps up what I found out.

My "contact" in this expedition was my old schoolmate, Lt. Gen. Marshall S. (Pat) Carter, the CIA's deputy director and general manager. I had practically invited myself (and lunch. I was going to buy him).

While waiting for the general to appear, I spoke Col.

Stanley J. Grogan, served up the first course. I yanked the pump handle on him a couple of times but nothing came out except some fascinating army reminiscences.

He did admit that there are eight major sections to CIA and his personal pass is good only for admission to three of them.

I thought he looked pretty reliable and should have been good for four or five, anyway.

Pat Carter came in in time for the chops and I really started to plow the ground. I mentioned all the books I had read about the Gestapo and the Russian MVD and the British M-16. Then I adroitly speculated about the make-up of the CIA and how so many people misunderstood it and that only a few newspapermen, like me, really sympathized with its problems.

Generally, this sympathy approach goes big and causes people to blubber and bawl and tell you everything they know. But from Pat and the Colonel I received about the same number of yups and nopes that you get out of an old Gary Cooper re-run.

Well, the CIA is the only agency of Government taxpayers have to take absolutely on faith. You can't audit it. It draws its money from all kinds of vague appropriations. Like other intelligence agencies around the world 80 per cent of its work is "open." That is, it amasses information from published sources, translates, indexes it and scores this data in miniature photography and, so far, an estimated 40 million punch cards.

In short, the CIA relies a lot more on clerks and diggers than on cloaks and daggers.

It's simple to record a mass of facts, but how to retrieve them when you want them is a huge stumbling

block. The amassing of facts the Russians have it easy because people in free countries publish just about everything. But in retrieval the CIA thinks it's tops. If you want to know about a Red agent named Vladimir who lived in Marseilles in the 40's you're supposed to be able to press the proper buttons and out of 100,000 cards two or three will drop.

How can Americans find out if they're getting their money's worth — whatever that money amounts to? They can't. They merely have to assume that if the President and a handful of top officials are satisfied they should be satisfied, too.

Under federal law the CIA, alone of all agencies, doesn't have to reveal the number, names or salaries of its employees. It can enter into secret contracts without bids. It can hide its travel expenses. It can admit up to 100 aliens a year without accounting for them to Immigration.

Strangely, we learn most about the CIA from our enemies. It was the Russians who huffily revealed that the CIA had tapped the cables in the main Russian communication tunnel in Berlin.

As President Kennedy said in his speech dedicating the new \$42 million dollar building: "Your successes are unheralded—your failures are trumpeted."

Well, General Carter and I had a fine lunch reminiscing about old school friends. Then I descended with the security officer in the locked elevator, passed the guards in the great marble entryway. When the cop at the door called me "Colonel" again, I saluted smartly.

True, the note pad in my pocket was still fresh and clean. But the noon hour hadn't been entirely wasted. Those lamb chops were real thick.

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